

L&PS New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety

Division of Gaming Enforcement

John J. Farmer, Jr., Attorney General

John Peter Suarez, Director

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Underage Gambling and Underage Drinking Enforcement

Efforts Increased for Summer Months; Prostitution Stings Planned

ATLANTIC CITY -- Undercover and surveillance initiatives by the Divisions of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) and State Police are being increased for the summer months in an effort to enforce the state's laws against underage drinking and gambling in Atlantic City casinos. Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr. and DGE Director John Peter Suarez announced today. In cooperation with the Atlantic City Police Department and the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, State Police assigned to the DGE will also be conducting an operation targeting prostitution.

The Attorney General said that the DGE investigators and New Jersey State Police will be conducting undercover operations and will be engaged in other surveillance to locate underage people in the casinos and to respond quickly when an underage person is found gambling or drinking alcoholic beverages. Underage gambling and underage drinking are disorderly persons' offenses punishable by up to six months in jail and fines of up to \$1000. Additionally, casinos face civil penalties for neglecting to enforce underage gambling and/or drinking laws.

Director Suarez said that from June through September of 1999, State Police assigned to the DGE arrested 175 people for underage gambling offenses. For the same period in 2000, 102 people were arrested for underage gambling offenses. In some of those instances, investigations by the DGE revealed that the casinos had committed regulatory violations in failing to enforce underage gambling laws. In 2000, casinos were assessed civil penalties of \$35,000 in underage gambling-related complaints. In 2001, casinos have been assessed \$225,000 in civil penalties stemming from underage incidents.

"When it comes to underage infractions, our focus is twofold: on the underage person and on casino licensees. Underage people caught gaming or drinking alcohol will have to take responsibility for their actions, and our casino licensees will be called to task if they have not taken proper measures to assure that patrons are legally old enough to participate," Director Suarez said. "We know that young people will try to get into the casinos to

gamble or to be served alcohol this summer. They should know that we'll be looking for them."

The Attorney General said that State Police assigned to DGE will also be working with the Atlantic City Police Department and Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office to conduct prostitution stings. So far in 2001, State Police have arrested 14 people on prostitution charges.

Director Suarez said that State Police assigned to the DGE have contacted each of the twelve casinos to inform them of these initiatives, and, "the Atlantic City casino industry has given us complete support in the effort to curb underage gambling and drinking and to keep illegal activity out of their establishments," Director Suarez said.

"I would like to thank Division of Alcohol Beverage Control Director Jerry Fischer, Atlantic City Police Chief Arthur Snellbaker, State Police Superintendent Colonel Carson J. Dunbar, Jr. and Atlantic County Prosecutor Jeffrey S. Blitz for their contributions to this effort," Director Suarez said.

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